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by

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In discussing the control of damage caused by rabbits in the Great Plains area it is helpful to distinguish between the true rabbits, of the genus Sylvilagus, and the so-called jackrabbits, of the genus Lepus, which are really hares.

Laws governing the control of rabbit damage vary between states. In Kansas, no poisons can be used for controlling rabbits. This leaves basically three approaches to solving a rabbit damage problem. These are: removal, exclusion and the use of repellents.

In some situations rabbit damage in an area can be suppressed or eliminated simply by removing the rabbits doing damage. This can be done with the use of live-traps or by shooting. Where feasible, the encouragement of sport hunting of problem rabbits provides a desirable solution to the problem.

Exclusion is probably the most effective means of controlling rabbit damage. Exclusion can be accomplished either by the construction of rabbit-proof fence or by the use of mechanical barriers to protect individual plants.

Fences should be constructed from woven wire or poultry netting of a mesh not greater than one and one-half inches, 30 to 36 inches high. For greatest effectiveness, the bottom 6 inches of the wire should be turned outward and buried 4 to 6 inches deep. Rabbit-proof fencing is usually too expensive to be practical except for small plots of high-value crops, such as gardens.

A variety of mechanical barriers can be used to prevent rabbit damage to individual plants, particularly to small trees. An effective barrier can be made from 30 gauge poultry netting of one-inch mesh 18 inches wide. The netting should be formed into a cylinder around the plant and should be braced to prevent rabbits from pressing it against the tree trunk and gnawing between the wires.

Commercially available wrappings are another form of exclusion that can be used to protect small trees. These may contain an aluminum or nylon net or may be made of treated jute cardboard. Aluminum foil and even ordinary sacking material have been used with good effectiveness when wrapped and tied around the tree.

The use of chemical repellents is usually cheaper and easier than the use of mechanical barriers, but the treatments must be repeated each year.

Repellent materials can be classified as either taste or odor repellents. Odor repellents such as bone tar oils, mothballs and creosote oil are generally not effective. Home mixtures of commonly available items such as rosin-alcohol, lime-sulphur, lime-turpentine and red pepper have been used with some success. These mixtures, however, are more difficult to use and probably less effective than commercial preparations.

Taste repellents are generally effective for use both in summer and winter. A variety of repellents are available for summer use on garden plants such as nicotine sulphate

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spray, tobacco dust mixed with alum, ZAC (zinc dimethyldithiocarbamate-cyclohexylamine), and THIRAM (tetramethylthiurmadisulfide).

Winter repelletns for use on trees and shrubs include THIRAM, TNB-A (trinitrobenzene-aniline complex), ZIP (ZAC), and rosin-alcohol.

Repellents can be either sprayed or brushed on. In winter, trees should be treated to above the height that rabbits will be able to reach when standing on the estimated snow cover. One application of the repellent is usually sufficient for an entire season.

Repellents used on food plants should not be applied once the edible portion has begun to form. Leafy vegetables treated with repellents should be washed thoroughly before consumption.

The methods just described also apply to the control of jackrabbit damage in similar situations. In the case of damage to range forage, however, there is some evidence that overgrazing leads to increases in jackrabbit populations. In these situations the most effective solution would be to return the range to proper balance. Population reduction through the use of extensive jackrabbit "drives" has had some short-term effectiveness in reducing jackrabbit damage.